

## PRESIDENT ROBINSON.

**Submits Proof that the McKinley Industrial School Exists—Is Purposes and How They are to be Made Effective—Causic Reply to Critic**

EDITOR COLORED AMERICAN:

In a recent issue of your journal a letter signed, "A Subscriber," asking the COLORED AMERICAN whether the "McKinley Industrial School," "existed" in Alexandria, and said writer presumed that some person "filled all the stations" and further your correspondent stated that the "people of Alexandria are getting tired of being imposed upon." At first I intended not to answer, your "Alexandria correspondent," but after a talk with several friends I concluded to answer this individual, whoever he may be. However, not for his benefit, but to place a short history of the school through the COLORED AMERICAN, to those who do not know of the work undertaken by me and associates. I doubt the "good faith" of your "Alexandria correspondent" in writing said letter, he or she did, when the information sought could as readily been obtained in Alexandria. The rise and progress of the McKinley School is as follows: I beg space for digression; Forty-nine years ago I was born in this city; have lived here ever since, but for the time spent as a pioneer teacher in the public free schools of Virginia, back in the seventies. Twenty-two years as an editor of colored newspapers—an experience that teaches me not to notice every article sent to newspapers under anonymous names, but to put this newly established individual work aright, your "Alexandria correspondent" may read this reply, and then he and all his kind will not attract any further notice from me. In 1894, with the co-operation of my brother, we organized an industrial school in this city, with a few indigent boys and girls. I became inspired in this work from reading of the efforts of Booker T. Washington, in Alabama. Later on, I wanted to hear and see Mr. Washington. I wanted him to come to Alexandria as my guest and speak under my auspices to the people of this city. Mr. Washington came and made a grand speech. I had invited the Hon. K. Kemper, the city superintendent of public free schools, a white Virginia gentleman, to introduce Mr. Washington. The place that Mr. Washington delivered his industrial message was in Roberts Chapel M. E. Church, and was introduced by Mr. Kemper. I listened intently to Mr. Washington, and when he had concluded his golden words for industrial training, I resolved in my own mind, with the aid of my associates, to work with all my strength and mind to build up an industrial school in this city. My purpose then as it is now to "dig deep, aim high." Three years we struggled on. In 1898 we had the satisfaction to see the corner stone of our first building, which is located at corner of Montgomery and Patrick streets. That corner stone was laid in the presence of over one thousand Alexandria people. This school has an existence and still exists. On that occasion the speakers, white and colored, spoke in glowing terms of our work and bespoke for it the good wishes of all for its future. The mechanics went to work and soon our new building was finished and the main hall dedicated. In 1898 the Legislature of Virginia passed an Act of Incorporation (our late Senator Mushback being its patron) incorporating the John Hay Normal and Industrial School of Alexandria, Va., and "to hold fifty acres of land and property to value of twenty-five thousand dollars." Our board adopted the name for our school for historical reasons, that our pupils might study the life of Lincoln and his biography. After the dedication of our school building the emblem of liberty was to be raised over the school. Our honorable Mayor, Mr. Geo. L. Simpson, visited our school, and was given a hearty cheer by our seventy-five pupils then in attendance, as the Mayor with his own hands, hoisted "Old Glory" into place. Afterwards His Honor addressed the school, teachers and management, giving us all good and timely advice. This is an evidence that the school has an existence and exists now. The plant began to grow. Broom, laundry, and other industrial departments were opened. Fire and wind brought losses

to our work. Death claimed one of our stalwart trustees, the late John A. Seaton. For want of money to meet certain liabilities, the work began to drag and several industrial departments were closed. The burning of our big barn, where a blacksmithing establishment was to be operated, was a serious loss. It has not been rebuilt as yet. Light and shadow played upon our work. Realizing all such work must demand great sacrifices, and we have made them, and are still making them, and while our efforts have been of some good to this community, I am reminded of what Prof. Wright said to General Howard, when he, Wright, was an humble student: "Tell 'em General, we are coming." I want to say that this industrial work I begun, is coming front, despite all anonymous writers, who would hurt the interests of dear old Alexandria, posing as they do to "expose wrong."

To further show that this school has an existence (your Alexandria correspondent to the contrary notwithstanding) was a brilliant gathering of representative Negroes, seated upon the platform of the chapel room of the John Hay Industrial School, October 9, 1898, with every seat filled by Alexandria and visiting friends. Among the eminent colored men that graced this occasion were Mr. W. H. Carney, the hero of Fort Wagner; the learned John W. Cromwell, Esq., Major C. B. Fisher, a war veteran; the veteran journalist, W. Calvin Chase, who made complimentary speeches and saw with their own eyes the building wherein this school is growing step by step. It has an existence and exists now. On a later occasion the Rev. Geo. S. Duncan, a distinguished white Presbyterian divine of Washington, D. C., visited this school and made a flag address. At that time hundreds of Alexandrians were present. The school had an existence then. The school exists now and with the aid of those who are trying to build it up, being an absolute necessity to this community, it is sure to succeed in its mission, as the sun rises and falls, your "Anonymous Alexandria correspondent to the contrary, notwithstanding."

I hold high personal endorsements anent this work, not of the usual, stereotyped formula, but from honorable, responsible officials of this city, business and private citizens, which I will not parade in this letter, but to those who are interested in this work upon pure and helpful motives I will take pleasure in showing to their entire satisfaction.

I was chosen secretary of the John Hay Industrial School when it was incorporated, being one of its founders. I served as its secretary until December, 1901, when I was chosen its president. At the same time Rev. Robt. H. Robinson was elected and accepted the office of secretary-treasurer.

Our secretary-treasurer, the Rev. Robert H. Robinson, is a gentleman who is one of the three surviving members who organized the Washington Conference, 1869. A Christian gentleman who has served acceptably every M. E. church of the Washington Conference in Washington city; a Christian worker who has served Roberts Chapel, where he too was born and reared, as steward, trustee, class leader, Sunday School superintendent, exhorter, local preacher and finally its pastor, and went out in 1864 as its only representative to join the First colored M. E. Conference which has made history for the race. A gentleman who enjoys the acquaintance, and being favorably known to men like Hon. John F. Cook, Dr. Purvis and a host of others of their standing; a race leader who was one of the first with late Henry Highland Garnett to organize the first convention in the South that asked for manhood suffrage; a lover of his people who run the gauntlet in ante bellum days to open and teach a night school for boys or young men in Alexandria, when it called for the "lash" to teach a colored person; in short a gentleman whom no reputable citizen of this city, be he white or colored, who knows him, but speak in the highest terms of his veracity and sterling character.

Our school is satisfied with its secretary-treasurer, Rev. Robert H. Robinson. This school began life in 1894, was incorporated by Virginia Legislature in 1898 and reincorporated 1902. On January 15, 1902, after a conference with former friends and others who propose to aid this work, it was decided to

change the name of the John Hay School to that of the Wm. McKinley Normal and Industrial School, in honor of the memory of our great President. As American citizens and admirers of the great McKinley we had a right to name our work as we thought best, and especially as we were pleasing our friends. Our board did not ask the advice of your "Alexandria anonymous correspondent" or any of our enemies. Our friends approved of the change in name and the Virginia Legislature on February 20th, 1902, re-enacted our Act of Incorporation and changed the name to that of the Wm. McKinley Normal and Industrial School, with the same power of the Act of 1898. These facts show our school exists. It lives in the hearts of those who are trying to uplift the people. It has the support of its friends. It is gaining step by step the influence of people worth having. Its management is guided by the Golden Rule. I being one of its founders, this work is dear to my heart, and I wish I may live to see it developed fully in every department, and that the city of Alexandria—a historic spot, may become more noted for her colored industrial school. I am proud of being an Alexandrian, and "able to live and let live" and that as a colored man I help to support the current expenses of municipal and state government and the public free schools, by paying taxes on personal real estate, which can be easily ascertained by asking our city collector of taxes. The motto of our industrial school work is "Forward."

Respectfully,

MAGNUS L. ROBINSON,  
President Wm. McKinley Normal and Industrial School.  
Alexandria, Va., March 10, 1902.

## Pleads Not Guilty.

Mrs. Ada Washington, being arraigned on a charge of shooting with intent to kill, plead not guilty, last week in Criminal Court No. 1. Trial will come later. Much sympathy is expressed for Mrs. Washington in her predicament and the public is assisting her to secure capable legal talent. She is being represented by R. R. Horner. It is regretted that Hon. George H. White's services are not being brought into requisition, according to the wish of many contributors.

## A Charity Reception.

The charity reception announced by the Banneker Relief Association for April 4 at Convention Hall, promises to be one of the "swell" social events of the spring season. The proceeds go for the benefit of the Day Nursery, Sojourner Truth Home and the Home for Friendless Girls. Dr. W. S. Lofton is at the head of a "hustling" committee on arrangements. The officers of Banneker Relief Association are: Aaron Russell, President; W. S. Lofton, vice president; James A. Payne, financial secretary; J. McK. Syphax, recording secretary; R. H. Nugent, treasurer; Warner Hurley, chaplain; Arthur Lucas, sergeant-at-arms. Board of Directors: John H. Butcher, Hamillur Turley, W. C. Evans, Thomas A. Griffith.

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